

Flower of Scotland – big decisions for a big year



KEVIN LINDSAY: Change cannot be all one way
HUGH BRADLEY: Tory policy is ruining freight
NEIL FINDLAY: Renewing the radical edge

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Is Wilkinson formula the basis for future claims?

Wilko raises the bar for railway pay talks

I WANT to thank all those working for our members in Freightliner and DBS hit by the serial effects on the freight sector of the loss of steel and coal traffic. This loss – 16% plus in areas already economically depressed – is a bitter pill to swallow for the whole supply chain. Every officer and company council member is working hard to ensure those impacted are given every opportunity to stay on the railway.

The Shaw report flirts with further fragmentation of the railway to offset investment debt. There is talk of selling off 18 major stations so Network Rail can concentrate on its core business. Rumours abound about the sale of the overhead line structure, and communications structure, of the railway. None of this makes economic or operational sense.

Meanwhile the competition authority, endorsed by the ORR, suggests breaking up inter-city routes to encourage open access. More madness! Interesting, of course, that it's only on lines that generate a surplus. These must be the only bits of the railway that need more – albeit smaller – geographical monopolies?

And we have Peter Wilkinson of the DfT, on £265k a year, publicly declaring that he is going to rip up the contracts of all those £60k a year three days a week train drivers? Apparently we all have big cars and credit cards and will crawl back after a couple of days on strike. To my knowledge there are no £60k a year three days a week drivers but maybe this base line of his should be the basis of all our future pay claims? We could call it the Wilkinson formula!

More importantly, is this DfT policy or did Wilkinson go rogue? We have asked the Transport Secretary to comment and asked what he is going to do about this person. And we reserve the right to take action if any driver suffers abuse or assault arising from his lies. As I said during the Night Tube and junior doctors disputes, they use this dirty tactic of demonising people publicly to damage their terms and conditions and futures. I wonder, is it our turn again?

Finally, I was overwhelmed by the massive support to allow me to continue as general secretary of our trade union. The numerous messages and endorsements, both within ASLEF and the wider movement, left me truly humbled and more determined not to let you down. Deepest thanks, as I see this as recognition of the work all of us in ASLEF do together.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary



News

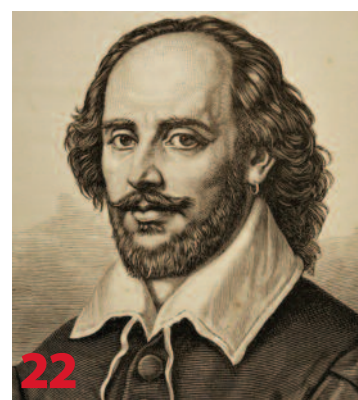
- Wilko and out: arrogant DfT boss who calls train drivers 'muppets' forced to say 'sorry' 4
- Rockin' through the ages at Glasgow Central 5
- Inspiring women to become train drivers 6
- Hussein Ezzedine on ASLEF's freight forum 7
- End of the (main) line for Farmer Smith 8

Features

- Neil Findlay: The SNP are just Tartan Tories 10
- Kevin Lindsay and Hugh Bradley report on Scotland's railway and the state of a nation 11
- Company council reports from ScotRail, Virgin, VTEC, CrossCountry, and DBS 12-13
- Alan Reid: Minding the digital gap 14
- Andy Hudd: Harmonisation at GWR 15

Regulars

- Branch News and 100 Years of Union 16-17
- Obituaries 19
- Letters and Classified Advertisements 20-21
- Last Word: Where there's a Will: 400 years of the Bard of Avon 22
- Food & Drink, Prize Crossword, ASLEF's Legal Services and Change of Address 23



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DfT boss who called drivers 'muppets' forced to apologise



Peter Wilkinson was told he had to back down

MICK Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary, has forced a government official – who stepped out of line on a public platform – to grovel after he called train drivers 'muppets' and told us to 'get the hell out of my industry'.

Peter Wilkinson, who earns £265,000 a year as director of rail passenger services at the Department for Transport, faced calls for his resignation after his extraordinary comments at a public meeting in Croydon, south London. Wilkinson, who lives in

Vienna, and commutes to work by plane, as he prefers not to travel by train, said he was looking forward to 'punch ups' with trade unions over his plans to force through changes to rosters.

Just hours after Mick demanded that Wilkinson withdraw his offensive remarks he offered this half-hearted apology: 'I apologise for any offence caused by my comments. I care passionately about the rail industry and I am committed to helping government deliver a better rail service for

passengers. To do this we need to work with the whole of the rail industry.' The DfT added: 'It is right that Peter Wilkinson has apologised for his comments.'

But Mick said: 'This bland unacceptable non-apology does nothing to restore faith or trust in the DfT for those in the frontline who deliver the railway every day.'

Mick has written to Patrick McLoughlin to ask if the Secretary of State for Transport thinks 'the term

muppet is appropriate language to use about staff who deliver the rail services we rely on every day' and to ask whether Wilkinson's views 'reflect those of the DfT'.

As well as his inflammatory language, Wilkinson told a string of lies – including the claim that drivers have the same 'fire break' rest stops as when trains were run on coal – at a meeting at the town hall organised by Gavin Barwell, Conservative MP for Croydon Central.

He said: 'I'm furious about it and it has got to change – we have got to break them. They have all borrowed money to buy cars and got credit cards. They can't afford to spend too long on strike and I will push them into that place. They will have to decide if

they want to give a good service or get the hell out of my industry.' Croydon councillor Jeet Bains, Conservative member for Coudsdon West, happily tweeted: 'Peter Wilkinson absolutely hammering train drivers. Called them muppets.' The comments were so bizarre that Sameena Rizwi of the DfT had to deny her boss had been drinking before speaking.

Wilkinson is a controversial figure, disliked at the department but said to have the backing of ministers. His salary is one bone of contention; Wilkinson earns £90,000 more than his boss, the permanent secretary, at the DfT; £30,000 more than the head of the civil service; and £125,000 more than the Prime Minister.



Sadiq Khan, Labour's candidate for Mayor of London on 5 May, came to head office last month to talk – and listen – to the EC (above) and some of our women members (below)



MICK RE-ELECTED GS: Mick Whelan has been re-elected unopposed as general secretary of ASLEF. When nominations closed on 26 February nobody had come forward to run against him. It is Mick's second five year term; he was first elected GS in November 2011 and will, consequently, start his second term this November, and be in position until 2021. 'I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those members, and officers, for their support, for all the nominations I received to run for a second term, and for all the messages I have had from men and women in this union,' said Mick. 'It is an enormous privilege to serve as general secretary of this trade union, and I will work just as hard for all our members for the next five years as I have during my first term.'

YES TO REVISED PACKAGE: ASLEF drivers on Arriva Trains Wales have voted to accept a revised package offered by the company. The vote was Yes 59% and No 41% on an 82% turnout. Simon Weller, national organiser, said: 'We are pleased that this matter has been resolved, thanks to the solidarity shown by our members.'

FLYING BACK: The *Flying Scotsman* returned to the iron road after a ten year £4.2 million restoration. The historic steam locomotive, bought by the National Railway Museum for £2.3 million in 2004, was painstakingly refurbished by Riley & Son at Bury to run on the West Coast main line once again. The loco, designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, and built in 1923 in Doncaster for the London & North Eastern Railway, was the first locomotive to travel at 100mph and is running in British Railways green livery.

TWEETS OF THE MONTH



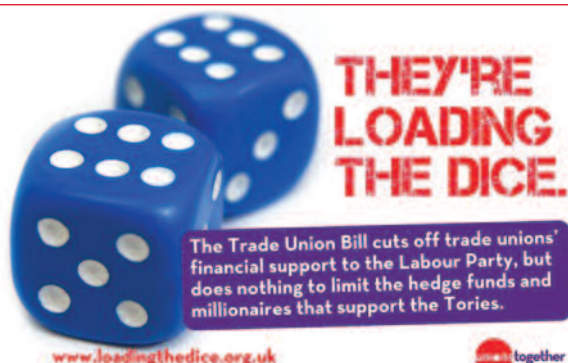
Can I apply for the job of running Southern Rail? I used to have a cowboy outfit, so am well qualified. **Ian Harris**



In the chamber & there are Tories here in dinner suits who've just voted to cut benefit payments to disabled people. **Jo Stevens**



'If most of us are ashamed of shabby clothes & shoddy furniture let us be more ashamed of shabby ideas & shoddy philosophies.' (Einstein) **Jeremy Corbyn**





Rock'n'rail in Glasgow

Start Me Up: Keith Richards does his impression of Johnny Depp as Jack Sparrow in this picture by Denis O'Regan (right)

PASSENGERS passing through Glasgow Central station had more than the usual anodyne ads to look at when a clutch of classic images by renowned rock photographer Denis O'Regan went on display. Denis, 62,

who made his name on the *NME* in the 1970s, has photographed pretty much every rock'n'roll legend of the last 40 years. 'I have photographed great musicians and travelled to extraordinary places to capture some



classic moments in music,' said Denis. 'Railway stations are a great way of connecting people with art in their everyday lives. It is fantastic to be able to share my photos with rail passengers.'

Mick hits out at market madness

GS Mick Whelan hit out at a 'risible' report from the Competition and Markets Authority calling for 'greater competition' on Britain's three main inter-city routes – the East Coast and West Coast main lines and Great Western. 'The idea that anything in this report would improve Britain's rail network is risible to anyone who works in, and understands, our industry. And it's frightening that the ORR, which is a regulator, not a policy maker, is trumpeting the fact that it was involved.'

ASLEF says yes to Night Tube

ASLEF members on London Underground have voted overwhelmingly to accept a new pay deal offered by London Underground – which means the capital should get its Night Tube at last. The vote on accepting LU's 2015 pay and Night Tube offer was 88.6% in favour, 11.4% against.

CONFERENCES

The **Scottish TUC** is at the Caird Hall in Dundee from Monday 18 to Wednesday 20 April. ASLEF's **annual assembly of delegates** is at the Macdonald Highlands hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 9 to Friday 13 May. The **Welsh TUC** is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Tuesday 24 to Thursday 26 May. The **Durham Miners' Gala** is on Saturday 9 July. The **Tolpuddle Martyrs' festival**, near Dorchester, is from Friday 15 to Sunday 17 July. The **Trades Union Congress** is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 11 to Wednesday 14 September. The **Labour Party conference** is at the BT convention centre in Liverpool from Sunday 25 to Wednesday 28 September.

QUOTE...

'The Chancellor might give you a rise. But he won't, with the Trade Union Bill, let you fight for one.' **Heather Stewart in The Observer**

...UNQUOTE

500 CLUB: W Jones, with number 6, won the March draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £366.

Off the rails



HARRY HARPHAM, the former miner and MP for Sheffield Brightside & Hillsborough, who sadly died of cancer in February, went out in style at Sheffield Cathedral. Music played at his memorial service included *You Don't Get Me I'm Part of the Union* by the Strawbs (Harry went on strike in 1984 when many Nottinghamshire miners continued to work); *The Whole of the Moon* by the Waterboys; *Working Class Hero* by John Lennon; *The Red Flag*; and – remember this was on consecrated ground – *Sympathy for the Devil* by the Rolling Stones.



ROSA PRINCE, in her biography *Comrade Corbyn* (Biteback, £20) dryly recalls how JC was regarded by one of his predecessors as Labour Party leader. 'Ah, Jeremy,' Tony Blair observed to friends in 1996 when the name of his neighbour in Islington came up in conversation. 'Jeremy hasn't made the journey.' That, of course, is why the party, in the ashes of the failure of New Labour, voted overwhelmingly last year for Jeremy – antidote to Blair, Brown, Mandy and the project.



PIERS MORGAN struck a wicked bet with John Whittingdale live on the *Good Morning Britain* sofa on ITV. 'Do you want a bet?' he asked the flustered Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. 'Let's have a bet, John! I'll

bet you £1,000, to charity, that if you guys [backing Brexit] win, and you may well, David Cameron has two hopes of remaining Prime Minister. No hope and Bob Hope. There's my hand. For charity?' Whittingdale, knowing he'd been cornered over his lack of loyalty to the leadership, muttered miserably, 'Alright. Go on, then.'



MEL THORLEY, extolling the virtues of a bash in Cheadle Hulme, confessed: 'It is, in reality, not just a Longsight reunion, but a gathering of any train crew between Edinburgh and Penzance, Reading to Manchester Piccadilly, to mark the retirement of Steve (I am not a well man) Biddulph. Biddy began as a cleaner at 9B in 1966, left the industry for three years after redundancies and depot shunting, then came back and clocked up 46 years on the railway...'



THE LAME excuses offered by the hapless customer services team at Abellio Greater Anglia stirred commuter Neil Martin to make a bingo card – A Bell End Later Angrier – for passengers to tick off the 'rubbish reasons' they hear. The company, doing its best impression of Queen Victoria, is not amused.



ISS crews collecting rubbish on VTEC trains have been forced to wear bibs proclaiming they are 'committed to enhancing your experience.' They are not happy bunnies – thinking, correctly, the bibs look ridiculous – and blame Richard Branson.

Can you inspire a young woman to become a train driver?



GABRIELLE OAKLEY, who spoke to ASLEF's Women's Representatives Committee at head office in March, explains how you can help inspire young women

THE Inspiring Women campaign aims to address the challenges faced by girls regarding gender stereotypes and careers. Children as young as six start to categorise jobs as 'male' and 'female' and this influences the career aspirations of young women. Research shows that more than half of teenage girls feel there are not enough positive female role models. Inspiring Women addresses both these issues by putting teachers in touch with women in their area who are happy to visit a school and talk to girls

about their experiences in the world of work.

The campaign works on the simple idea of asking women to pledge one hour of their time each year. Since our launch two and a half years ago, 20,000 women have signed up; women working in all kinds of sectors, doing all kinds of jobs, all over the country. Free for all state schools, the campaign has reached out to more than 250,000 girls across the UK, encouraging them to think about their future and achieve their full potential.

The campaign, which has the support of the teaching unions, also runs a series of events to showcase the contribution of women in different sectors, and encourage girls to consider a wide range of jobs that they may not have thought about.

Inspiring Women is used by eight out of ten state secondary schools, and the campaign



Alison Miller, District 2 WRC rep, and a member of Polmadie branch, in the driver's seat for a feature on women doing 'men's work' in *The Guardian*

has just started to target primary schools as well. If you would like to help, it only takes a few minutes to register. Go to www.inspiringwomenscampaign.org and complete the personal profile. Once you have selected where you can volunteer, teachers will be able to see your profile and invite you in to talk to students.

QUOTE...

'Many of Jeremy Corbyn's opponents on the right of Labour pride themselves on their electability, on being good at politics, yet show little understanding about why they lost so badly.' – Owen Jones in the *New Statesman*

...UNQUOTE

CONVOYS OF DRIVERLESS TRUCKS ON MOTORWAY

The DfT has given the green light for a stretch of the M6 in Cumbria to become a test route for platoons of driverless juggernauts. The lorries will travel in convoy, near Carlisle, with steering, acceleration and braking in the drones controlled by a driver in the leading lorry.

DRIVERLESS CAR HITS BUS

A driverless Google car, out on test, has crashed into a bus. No one was injured but the tech company admitted 'we clearly bear some responsibility' for the collision in Silicon Valley, California.



Marz Colombini models ASLEF's Kes tee-shirt – with a Harvey Smith to the Tories' anti-Trade Union Bill – based on the iconic image from the famous Ken Loach film. £10 (inc p&p); email admin@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

Storm clouds over freight

PHILIPPA EDMUNDS, who runs the Freight on Rail campaign, reports on key upgrades, government grants, and DfT freight strategy

The storm clouds over rail freight persist as we wait to find out what restructuring the Shaw report recommends to the Treasury. Some key upgrades will go ahead but the timetable for delivery has slipped to 2020/21 for many projects and freight growth is constrained by the limits of the rail network.

On a positive note, it is excellent that the government has retained rail freight grants for a further four years; they

represent excellent value for money for the taxpayer. Grants have been effective in moving freight from road to rail (container volumes have doubled) and are paid in recognition of the socio-economic benefit of removing trucks from Britain's roads and as a means of compensating rail for the road/rail freight market distortion. Rail has to compete with HGVs which have far higher external costs than rail freight but only pay

around 30% of the costs they impose on society and the economy.

The Department for Transport, which is writing a rail freight strategy, in which I am involved, is promoting modal shift as a means of reducing freight emissions as part of its freight carbon review. Key outputs include updated rail/road carbon and air quality emissions; developing options for strategic freight capacity; modal shift opportunities; integrating timetabling for freight paths with passenger services; highlighting what rail freight does for UK plc; and developing sustainable charging and support for rail freight.

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

GS Mick Whelan has called on the House of Lords to protect 1,000 years of freedom from a spiteful Tory attack. Mick, speaking at a Campaign for Trade Union Freedom meeting, said: 'The government's Trade Union Bill is an attack on the fundamental rights not just of trade unionists but of all those in civil society. This bill, which is ideologically-driven dogma, is an attempt to shackle not only the voice of trade unions but the thoughts and actions of the many.'

'No one gave the trade union movement a voice. It had to be fought for, and earned, through blood and sweat and through hardship and struggle. It cannot and should not be allowed to be stolen by vindictive legislation. That's why we will continue to campaign in favour of not just amending bad legislation but halting it. And we will ignore it or disobey it if we have to.'

'Trade unions are – and always were – about people. We are democratic organisations that articulate the voice of the members who tell us their wishes. We're about the people who stand together for a greater good – and a better world – for each other. This is something those who thrive on greed for the few and a society of individuals will never understand.'

False market squeezes opportunity for growth

HUSSEIN EZZEDINE of Edinburgh No 1 branch reports from the ASLEF freight forum in Liverpool

THE threat of live redundancies for the first time since the steam era created a sombre mood as delegates gathered in Liverpool for the 2016 freight weekend. Mick Whelan got things underway with an overview, covering the demise of traditional bulk freight, and future challenges. Louise Ellman, Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside and chair of the Transport Select Committee, was the first invited speaker, followed by John Battershell, safety director of Freightliner, and Greg March from Colas. All gave interesting presentations and took questions. The need to engage with all

operators, including those who don't yet recognise ASLEF, was recognised as a priority, so the Colas contribution was welcome.

The second day consisted of group workshops, reporting on issues such as casualisation, the race to the bottom, infrastructure investment, and membership density. Renationalisation is a key priority; rail privatisation has failed on so many levels but it's particularly apparent in freight; instead of competing with road haulage, a false market has been created that squeezes out opportunity for growth. The deep-rooted crisis is well understood; insecurity and a constant cycle of firefighting, dealing with a mess not of our making, is not much of a future to which to look forward. The current manifestation of this is in Freightliner Heavyhaul, but nobody was under any illusions,



Louise Ellman picks up her ASLEF goody bag after talking to members

this isn't the final round, the next threat is never far away.

A lot of ground was covered in the limited time available, there were some fine contributions and, after a worthwhile weekend,

delegates left determined to continue standing together regardless of employer – understanding that unity, going forward, is essential if a brighter future is to be secured.

QUOTE...

'In this May's elections the SNP will travel the country carrying an anti-austerity message of convenience in utter repudiation of its eight-year-long vapour trail in government of doing so little to support the poor.' – Jim Murphy in the New Statesman

...UNQUOTE

SOUTHEASTERN OMNISHAMBLES

Commuters forced to stand in the toilets because of 'crazy' overcrowding on Southeastern trains into St Pancras have complained of an 'omnishambles' and called for the renationalisation of the railways. Scores of passengers vented their anger on social media, One, Hannah Holdstock, tweeted: 'Chaos. We pay an awful lot of money to travel into London, for them to not be able to run these trains. Pretty disgusting.'

MORNING COMMUTERS ARE 'PACKED LIKE SARDINES'

Commuters travelling from Newmarket to Cambridge say trains are so busy that journeys are an 'accident waiting to happen'.

Debbie Hayes, who takes the 7.52 Abellio Greater Anglia service, says passengers are 'packed on like sardines', causing serious safety concerns. 'For the last month they have only put on two carriages; when they put on three it's still not enough. We're often stuck in a doorway. By the time we reach Dullingham it's an accident waiting to happen. If the conductor needed to get through in an emergency there is no way he'd be able to do it. If the train had to brake suddenly, or hit something, people would be killed, and many more seriously injured.'

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION WARNS TORIES

The International Labour Organization, a United Nations agency, has urged the UK government to review the most controversial aspects of the Tories' anti-Trade Union Bill, the biggest crackdown on union rights for 30 years, to ensure they do not contravene international labour law. The ILO wants the government to look again at plans to allow agency workers to replace strikers and to exempt education and transport from its 40% threshold for strike action. It called on David Cameron to modernise the rules for balloting set out in the bill, which include a requirement that voting must be done by post.



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Farmer Smith banned from the main line

T HE Office of Rail and Road has issued a prohibition notice to the troubled West Coast Railway Company preventing it from running services on the main line railway. The ORR banned the controversial heritage operator – owned by David Smith, a Yorkshire farmer who, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, ‘runs it in an authoritarian manner like his own private train set’ – after a string of safety failures.

The final straw for the regulator was a near miss at Wootton Bassett on 7 March 2015 when *Tangmere*, a steam loco pulling 13 carriages from Bristol Temple Meads to Southend Victoria, ran a signal set at danger and came to rest at a busy junction

on the Great Western main line less than a minute after a packed high speed FGV passenger train, travelling at 100mph from Swansea to Paddington, passed. An ORR investigation revealed that Farmer Smith's staff had turned off essential safety equipment – the Train Protection Warning System – designed to apply an emergency brake if a driver makes an error.

After this incident the ORR issued an improvement notice – but things have not improved. The ORR says it ‘considers WCRC continues to present a safety risk, hence we are issuing a prohibition notice. Under the terms of the notice, the company will not be able to operate trains on the main line network until we are satisfied its governance and operations meet industry practice and are fit for the scale of its operation.’

Ian Prosser, chief inspector of railways, said: 'A decision to stop a train operator from running rail services is not taken lightly. However, my concerns about the West Coast Railway Company's lack of appreciation of the seriousness of a range



West Coast Railways: How we reported the Yorkshire farmer's problems in February

of incidents over the last year, coupled with the ORR's concerns on the company's governance, regrettably make this prohibition necessary. These failings create a significant risk to operations on the main line network.'

WCRC runs 500 trains a year, including the famous Jacobite service from Fort William to Mallaig featured in the *Harry Potter* films.

Hold on tight

TRACEY LONGMAN of Bedford branch reviews a new book about public transport in London

How did London's transport network come about? And who were the people who did the work? What were their working lives like and how did they organise to improve them? *Hold On Tight: London Transport and the Trade Unions* by Martin Eady (Capital Transport Publishing, £19.95) follows their story from the Victorian era of independent

underground railway companies, horse buses and horse-drawn trams, to present day campaigns against privatisation and the Night Tube.

This social history paints a Victorian picture of expensive buses run for the middle-classes, subsidised trams run by a progressive London County Council, private rail companies running the early underground lines, and unions struggling to recruit and improve the dire working conditions. By 1914 the horses have gone, many of the operations have started to merge, and the workers are much better organised. During the war.

women join and by 1918 are on strike demanding equal bonuses.

The rise and fall of bus workers' power to protect their wages and conditions is well told. Ongoing disputes on the Underground are put into context with the rise of aggressive management from 1988 and various privatisation schemes. Martin Eady, while on the NUR executive committee, was crucial in co-ordinating the strike dates of London buses and Underground with a series of national one day strikes on British Rail in the summer of discontent in 1989 – the only time this has happened. This book addresses why, despite a common employer,



the 'rubber versus metal wheels' division of the workforce and its unions has always held.

NEW SILK ROAD

A freight train made history when it took just 14 days to travel from Yiwu in China to Tehran in Iran – passing through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on its 10,000km journey from Zhejiang province to the Persian capital – far quicker than the transit trucks that make the same journey and a month less than the traditional shipping route from Shanghai to Bandar Abbas. Mohsen Pourseyyed Aqai, head of Iran Railways, said: ‘The train travelled 700km per day, saving 30 days on the normal time it takes to go the distance. It’s an important step for the revival of the Silk Road.’

STATION TO STATION

Network Rail is preparing to sell some of its biggest stations to developers and shopping centre landlords. Bankers at Citigroup have been hired to look at options for 18 stations, including London Waterloo, Bristol Temple Meads, Birmingham New Street, Manchester Piccadilly, Edinburgh Waverley, Reading and Leeds which could either be a straightforward sale – privatising what is now in public hands – or offering, like the discredited PFI deals, long-term concessions to big private firms. Sources at Network Rail say 'it won't be a fire sale, we're looking for value' but it will, say critics, 'allow private firms to get their snouts back in the public trough,' pushing up costs for operators, which in turn means higher fares for passengers.

◉ NAMED AND SHAMED

Rail passengers in the south-east of England are the least satisfied in the UK, according to a survey by the consumer group *Which?* Southeastern was the worst operator, along with Thameslink and Great Northern. Overcrowding, poor value for money and dirty trains were the most common complaints. Grand Central, which runs on the East Coast main line, was the top-rated company, followed by Hull Trains. *Which?* reports the worst TOCs for delays as Arriva Trains Wales, Thameslink, Great Northern, Great Western and Southern.

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NEIL FINDLAY, MSP for the Lothians region, points up the differences between Labour and the SNP and explains why only one party will strive to build a better Scotland

THE logical, rational decision for Scottish trade unionists in the Scottish Parliamentary elections in May is undoubtedly a vote for Scottish Labour. Under the leadership of both Jeremy Corbyn, across the UK, and Kezia Dugdale, in Scotland, a clear red wedge has been driven between Labour and those pretently social democrats in the SNP. Labour under Corbyn has renewed its radical edge and offered a genuine alternative to the austerity politics preached by the Tories, while under Kezia in Scotland we have exposed the SNP for what they are – the same old Tartan Tories that they always have been.

JOCK TAMSON'S BAIRNS

Ideologically and practically it is clear from their performance in government, and it was clear from their independence white paper, that they are nowhere near being social democrats, let alone socialists. They don't believe in public ownership, they sure as dammit don't think the redistribution of wealth is all that good an idea, and they appear quite comfortable with a replication of Tory austerity politics and the job losses and cuts to public services which inevitably happen as a consequence.

In the rail industry the SNP were content to award the franchise to Abellio, incredibly a Dutch public operator, rather than even consider how they could ensure the franchise was taken back into our public sector. In renewables they prefer to fly the world, including to some of the world's worst abusers of workers' rights, such as Qatar, to pitch for investment monies, rather than give any consideration to publicly or community owned schemes.

When it comes to class politics apparently we are all 'Jock Tamson's bairns' and, according to the word of our rock star selfie queen First Minister, Scottish bosses are better than bosses anywhere else just by the mere fact that they are Scottish. So, yes, the capitalist class here is cuddlier and softer than elsewhere. The SNP vision is one of Scottish corporatism, laced with heavy doses of complacency, which awards £10 million of inward investment grants to Amazon whilst conveniently ignoring the way the company exploits workers and refuses to recognise trade unions.

In public procurement Scottish Labour led the way, arguing for a living wage, an end to



Neil Findlay (above) says only a vote for a Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn (right speaking at an ASLEF meeting) and Kezia Dugdale (top with Jeremy) is a vote for fairness and equality in Scotland

zero hours contracts, and a ban on blacklisting in all publicly funded contracts – all rejected by the SNP. With the Nationalists, class politics and class struggle take a back seat – as can be seen by their refusal to instigate an inquiry into the unfair and disproportionate arrests of Scottish miners during the 1984-85 strike and, in the present day, their abject and miserable refusal to conduct an inquiry into blacklisting, and spying on trade unionists and political activists by undercover police officers.

COUNCILS ON THE BRINK

Recently the mask has slipped even further in their ruthless treatment of local government. Year on year cuts to the grant to local authorities, alongside a centrally imposed council tax freeze, has taken councils to the brink. Services have been lost and 60,000 jobs cut with a further 15,000 said to be going in the next year or so. What makes things even worse is the SNP's point blank refusal to look at using the powers of the Parliament to do anything about it; demonstrating again their right-wing ideological leanings, opposing progressive and redistributive tax increases, and instead proposing to cut air passenger duty and freezing council tax, benefiting the wealthy most.

Scottish Labour is clear that the Parliament should act as a ballast against any attack from wherever it comes – this was one of the motivations for its establishment. It was set up to use its powers to protect jobs and services and improve people's lives. The SNP refuses to do this; it's almost as if they want to see a full frontal attack to work so as to provide succour to their continued arguments for independence. This reason alone is surely sufficient for trade unionists to vote Labour in May.

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

But there are more reasons than that to vote for Scottish Labour. We will build 60,000 council houses for rent and we will help young people to save to buy their first home. At our conference late last year we made some very significant decisions – for instance, to reject TTIP in its entirety; to exploit low interest rates to buy back PFI contracts; and to reject Trident renewal. Labour will have at the heart of its mission a commitment to tackle poverty and inequality. We recently published a report into health inequalities – this is a practical plan to tackle this national scandal. We will tackle social care, we will protect the NHS, now under pressure like never before; we will restore and value our colleges, which have endured a full frontal attack under the SNP; and we will bring the railways back under public ownership.

Voting Labour is, once again, a vote for fairness and a vote for equality. We are the true defenders of trade unionism and the rights and interests of working people. Some have tried to copy us on that front – but they have failed miserably.

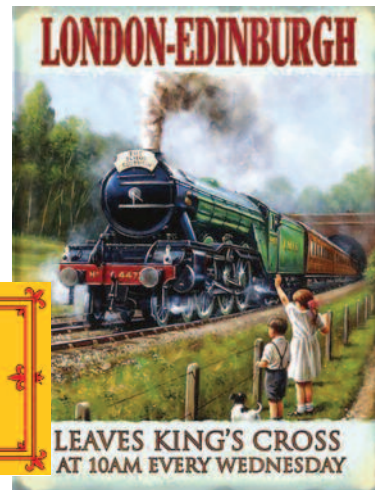
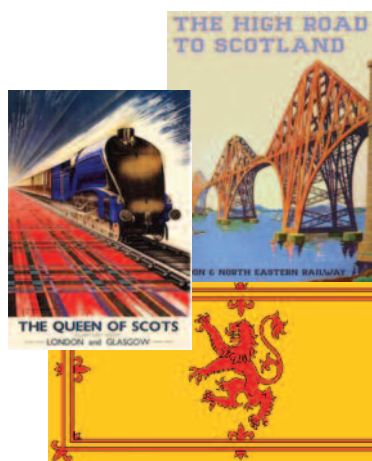
Why go for a fake when you can have the real thing? Use both votes and vote Labour on Thursday 5 May.

○ Neil Findlay, 47, was born and brought up in Blackburn, West Lothian. He left school at 17 to become a bricklayer and then, after studying Geography and Politics at Strathclyde University, a housing officer in Livingston and a teacher in Falkirk. He was elected to the Scottish Parliament as MSP for the Lothians region in 2011. He is Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Work Skills and Training. He also sits, for Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley, on West Lothian Council.

2016 – a big year for ASLEF, Scotland, the UK and Europe



District 2 Organiser KEVIN LINDSAY opens our four page special report by looking ahead to our ScotRail pay claim, the challenges for the freight sector, the election for the Scottish Parliament and the EU referendum



THIS year promises to be a big year for ASLEF, Scotland, the United Kingdom and Europe. As with so many of the big decisions, ASLEF will be at the forefront of the campaigns, in line with our policies. As a trade union we have started negotiations with Abellio ScotRail over this year's pay claim; the difference, this year, is that we are only talking about an increase in salary. We will be having separate talks on a new restructuring deal for drivers. Whilst the company will have a list of aspirations for these talks, so do we. If – and it's a big if – we get a package to put our members, I would like it to contain a reduction in the maximum shift length; additional annual leave; a true 35 hour week; 156 rest days with Sundays as part of the working week; and a salary north of £50k. These are

bold statements – but change cannot be all one way. The company council and I will endeavour to get an improved set of t&cs which ScotRail drivers want.

In recent times our freight members have seen depot closures and redundancies. Whilst we've worked with Virgin West Coast and ScotRail to create vacancies it's extremely disappointing to see the state of the freight industry. I have met with Derek Mackay, the Scottish Transport Minister, to raise our concerns and asked for more money to be put into freight grants; sadly, though, he told me the FOCs are not even using the money available just now and there was no demand for additional support. I have lobbied him to try and ensure that the Scottish government uses its power to force TOCs in

Scotland to retain the skills of redundant freight drivers here in Scotland. But whilst they are sympathetic to this they were unable to get the passenger companies to commit to employing all redundancy-threatened rail staff although we did get all a guaranteed interview. This decision will lead to Scotland losing skilled freight drivers and will have a big impact on our ability to rebuild the freight industry.

We are facing a Scottish general election in May and, whilst ASLEF remains an affiliate of the Scottish Labour Party, and we will campaign for Labour, we recognise that the likely outcome will be a continuation of the present SNP government. As a union we lobby all political parties on policies and we will continue to do so. In fact, I meet quarterly with the Transport

Minister and engage with various Nationalist ministers to further our aims and aspirations. We have a cordial working relationship with the SNP government.

On the in/out referendum on membership of the European Union, we as a trade union have made our position clear and there are items on the agenda at this year's AAD which will lead to further debate. I'm sure members will engage and participate in the many debates that will take place over the next four months as the UK decides its future.

Finally I look forward to seeing as many members as possible in Aviemore at this year's AAD, the first time our annual conference has come to the Scottish Highlands, and it will be a double celebration as the Inverness branch celebrates its centenary this year.

Alarm bells are ringing



HUGH BRADLEY, EC member for District 2, reports on pensions, the TU Bill, and the Shaw report into the future of Network Rail

EVERY year we are told we face various difficulties and challenges – and this year is no different! After last year's re-election of the Tory government we are now in the process of dealing with the fall-out from their attacks on the vulnerable, with their continued austerity measures, and on the working-class with their anti-Trade Union Bill, which is a blatant attack on the organisation, funding and functioning of our trade unions. It is an attack on every worker, on workers' rights and, indeed, on our human

rights and we, as a movement, are opposing it at every turn.

We have come through the government's Pensions Act which has impacted on the Railways Pension Scheme and sees the ending of contracting out and the National Insurance rebate. All things considered, we have had relative success, given the circumstances, thus ensuring our pension funds remain affordable and sustainable.

The forthcoming Shaw report commissioned by the government to consider the future of Network Rail, given the cost of overruns and its £38bn debt, will have an impact on our industry. Alarm bells are ringing given that options being looked at include full privatisation and the breakup of NR. We will be opposing this as

it is a recipe for reduced spending on safety, possible line closures, and increased fares. We also remember the appalling fatalities on the railway under Railtrack and the ethos at that time of profit before safety.

On a positive note, ASLEF was the first trade union to nominate Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour leadership last year and, at long last, we have a left leadership promoting a principled and progressive agenda as opposed to the Tory-lite agenda which failed so abysmally in the past.

In Scotland the Labour Party has promoted policies which are challenging the SNP's claims to be a party of the left. In June we will have the EU referendum which has been fast-tracked by the Tories. As an EC we made the decision to withdraw from the EU and I have no doubt that most of the above items will be discussed and debated at our conference in Aviemore in May.

One year in

ANDREW FERGUSSON,
company council
secretary, reports on
ScotRail 12 months in

AFTER a near 50 year wait, following the Beeching report that slaughtered rail infrastructure across England and Scotland, ScotRail reopened the Waverley line, now known as the Borders rail link. Her Majesty the Queen officially reopened this line, with an extension from Newcraighall to Tweedbank, and a brand new train crew depot at Tweedbank. It is proving very popular and, in its first month, carried 125,000 passengers, proving Beeching was wrong, but we all know that now!

Abellio, the new landlords of ScotRail, are one year into their franchise, and have not had to seek out their troubles from the off, from protracted pay negotiations, to a uniform that's a real talking point after a nine month delay, to our



Plenty of problems for Abellio in their first year as landlords at ScotRail

second ops director, then straight into another pay deal. We've also moved to a new rostering system, not without its problems, and there have also been unforeseen problems with a new payroll system. Hopefully, the second year will improve for all.

Company council, along with the district officer, are now in pay talks for 2016, working towards 156 rest days and the contentious issue of Sundays inside the working week, along with a restructuring package, DR12, which will prove to be a challenge, no doubt.

Biggest project for a number of years is also due with the closure of Glasgow Queen Street station, with around 12 depots affected for around six months of this year,

which will prove a challenge for all concerned, especially with a rostering department in which the men have lost faith.

Company council has gained two new members – Bro J Walsh and one from Bro J Paton and Bro J Baxter, who are still in the election process as I write – joining Bros M Fraser, A McCallum and A Fergusson. A new council of five representing more than 1,200 drivers. CC would like to thank our departed chairman, Bro I Smith from Glasgow branch, for all his efforts and the sacrifices he has made over the last 12 years representing ASLEF and its Scottish members. And, lastly, Scotland would like to welcome all delegates to Aviemore for this year's AAD in May.



Drivers recruited

Virgin West Coast company council reps MARK FREND and JIM MORRISON report on Virgin West Coast

2015 was an eventful year for us as we saw the first drivers recruited to Virgin West Coast in Scotland for more than 10 years and we are pleased to report that we were able to offer positions to eight drivers (four at Polmadie and four in Edinburgh) from the freight sector who were facing redundancy. It must be said this could not have been achieved without our lead officer and District Secretary Kevin Lindsay. 2015 also saw us achieve a reasonable pay increase, and we secured a booking-on allowance of £75 for rest day working. Another milestone was the agreement reached by Kevin and council for the annual leave calculation taking into account

Hoping to help

JOHN HAY, company council secretary, reports on CrossCountry

2016 saw CrossCountry drivers enter the second year of a two-year pay deal which will see this year's pay rising by RPI or 2%. The company council has just concluded consultation on changes to the pension scheme caused by the ending of contracting out by the Tory government. In accordance with the trade union/ATOC framework agreement this saw the default retirement age for non-protected members move to 62

Hard work by ASLEF and our membership

CHIC BOLTON, train crew company council, reports on DBS

Starting with a sombre note, the decision to close Longannet power station has had a widespread effect throughout DB Schenker, resulting in the closure of Longannet and Hunterston depots. The drivers involved have had to either seek employment with other rail companies or move to various DBS depots around the UK. However, due to the hard work behind the scenes by ASLEF, the damage has been massively reduced with seven drivers from the affected depots finding employment with Virgin Trains and another two being employed at ScotRail. This leaves 15 drivers taking redundancy or moving south.

At the time of writing this report, company council has placed 11 drivers in depots within DBS, with four deciding to leave the industry altogether. I would like to wish all the drivers involved all the best for the future, whatever it may hold.

On a brighter note, Network Rail has decided to build its infrastructure



DBS drivers are committed to providing a superior service

plant/quarry at Millerhill yard. And DBS has won a temporary contract with ScotRail to supply conductors for diversionary routes whilst Queen Street station is being upgraded. In my opinion, this was won by the versatility shown by all DBS drivers involved with the running of extra services for Abellio/ScotRail at short notice due to the closure of the Forth Road Bridge. This shows DBS management and other potential customers that our people are committed to providing a superior service and we should take great pride in this and build on it for the future. But the hard work now begins to keep, and hopefully win, new contracts as it will benefit all remaining DBS depots in Scotland. I am optimistic about the future within Scotland because of all the hard work done by ASLEF and the membership.



Lego building doesn't work

RAB WICKSTED, company council secretary, reports on Virgin Trains East Coast – a joint venture between Richard Branson at Virgin (10%) and Brian Souter of Stagecoach (90%) – which took over the East Coast franchise in March last year

Company council was to meet with ASLEF's executive committee on Wednesday 10 February, at head office, after our arranged meeting with management on Monday 1 February, but that was cancelled because of unforeseen circumstances, and this meeting with our executive will now be rearranged. The CC must follow procedures and give management an opportunity to answer our questions regarding iPads payments, pensions and holiday pay entitlement.

We now await a new date for those discussions so we will continue to use the iPads, be it still on a voluntary basis, and still not compulsory for using the TAS system, although we would encourage all drivers, at this time, to keep using this system.

This council, along with our EC, have made it very clear to management where we stand on any payment forthcoming to us as drivers, as we discussed savings and future savings by way of using iPads and TAS.



We aren't looking for rosters to be delivered by iPad

We are not, repeat not (so please stop the rumours and suggestions as other grades have) in any way looking at having rosters, be it daily or weekly, being delivered to us by iPads. Drivers need to seriously look at the implications of this (have we all forgotten centralised rostering a few years ago?) so please don't ask your roster clerk for this, as this must be, if ever, a negotiated item for us as your company council to deal with.

Our driver establishments have increased through recruitment but, as your council, we have voiced our reservations as to how this is being done, as it seems to us that the human resources dept is taking the lead with recruitment. We also now feel that the Lego building exercise (yes, Lego!) is another form of psychometric testing that doesn't work, as potential drivers aren't being recruited because of this stupid process they have in place; indeed, we also had discussions regarding part of their process of a video interview via a laptop or tablet, etc, and this process has, thankfully, been stopped.

We will keep drivers informed, by way of branch meetings and phone calls, or texts, as it wouldn't be appropriate for us to email drivers regarding any progress on where we are. Drivers should call their CC rep for any information they require, and please feel free to do so. (Neil Castle is the seconded rep for Doncaster, and Paul Basham for Newcastle until the chair, Mark Wakenshaw, recovers from his accident).

ected for first time in 10 years



Storm Frank battered the west coast and shut part of the main line

overtime, etc, payments.

2016 saw the west coast of Scotland (along with most of Britain) battered by Storm Frank, which resulted in severe damage to Lamington

viaduct, causing the closure of the main line; drivers based in Scotland faced short-term alteration to duties and longer diagrams, also lengthy taxi journeys to and from Carlisle. It would be remiss not to mention the alertness of Brother Mark Ryan (Edinburgh) whose swift action prevented a more serious outcome.

After many long discussions with management we have finally obtained barrier passes for our drivers who work between Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queen Street.

Lastly, we would like to welcome Keith Sinfield (Preston) to the West Coast company council and record a special thanks to Graham Fazakerley, the previous Preston CC rep, who helped us to achieve so much during his term of office. We wish Graham well in the future.

freight drivers



The pensionable pay cap will not affect CrossCountry drivers this year

colleagues in the freight industry are facing live redundancies the council will resolve to help identify vacancies at CrossCountry depots which may be of assistance.

and a pensionable pay cap of RPI + 0.25% introduced from April for all members. The pensionable pay cap will not affect CrossCountry drivers this year as this year's pay award was agreed before the pension changes were proposed.

The council is also in negotiation with regard to average holiday pay; these discussions have been long and protracted and, with no firm offer on the table, the negotiators have been instructed to exhaust the machinery and report to the executive committee. With the sad news that our

Impact on rail of the death knell for coal



HUGH BRADLEY, EC member for District 2, and a driver with Freightliner Intermodal, reports on freight services in Scotland

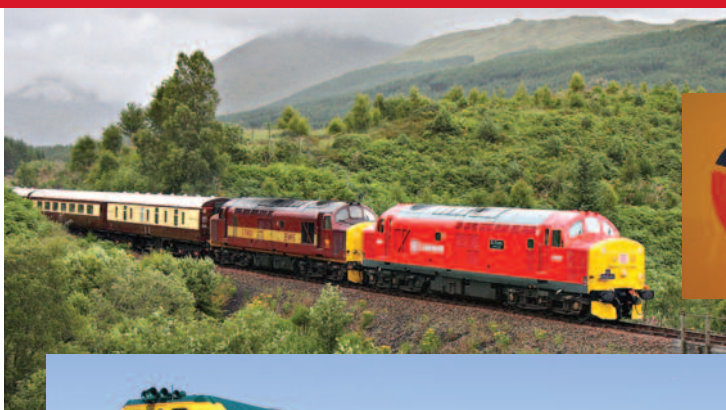
IT IS pleasing to note that increased passenger volumes continue on the railway with driver numbers increasing along with our ASLEF membership. In Scotland there is investment in the infrastructure with electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh route, the revamping of Queen Street station, double tracking of some routes and increasing some loop lengths.

All good news but, unfortunately, this is not replicated on the freight side.

There has been no respite on the freight since last year's Caledonian Sleeper refranchising where Serco had won the contract and were now going to use GBRf drivers rather than the incumbent DBS drivers to run the service.

This year, largely due to the implementation of Tory energy policy, which resulted in increasing the carbon surcharge on coal-fired power stations up and down the country, we are now looking at the death knell of the coal industry in the UK and dealing with the impact on our rail freight industry (at the same time the government also abandoned the programme to fund carbon capture technology in which the UK was a world leader!)

We have seen the closure of Worksoop branch and we are now in the process of the



Longannet power station closing on 31 March with the closure of the DBS depots at Hunterston and Longannet.

This downturn in coal traffic has also impacted on Freightliner Heavy Haul with the company experiencing a massive loss of traffic resulting in the closure of Garston and Killoch depots in Ayrshire and with further job losses up and down the country. It is important to emphasise that we are now going to experience the first 'live' redundancies in our railway since the British Rail days, where people will effectively be forced out of our industry. As I write this we are in the consultation process for those Heavy Haul drivers involved.

As with the DBS surpluses, and Heavy Haul redundancies, it is heartening to know that the company council reps and lead officers are doing everything in their power to redeploy those affected drivers at other TOCs and FOCs and are working closely with those company councils.

The loss of coal traffic equates to a 40% reduction in rail freight in Scotland. However, in the Scottish government's recent *Delivering the Goods: Consultation towards Scotland's Rail Freight Strategy* they are optimistic about the future of rail freight in Scotland.

They are hopeful of strong growth in the domestic intermodal market, increased timber traffic, and want to encourage major infrastructure projects to move as much material as possible by rail. They are also supportive of freight grants and revenue support schemes with a more positive long term track access charging system.

In our submission to the consultation we were a bit more cautious towards their optimism, realising that trying to make up that 40% decline may be somewhat more difficult, and will take time.

Nevertheless, however successful they are in encouraging more freight to rail it does not currently help those redundant Heavy Haul drivers or those redeployed DBS drivers.

Workplace learning from Aberdeen to Ayr and Dundee to Dumfries



ALAN REID, ASLEF education's project worker in Scotland, reports on another successful year

THE first year of the ASLEF education project in Scotland has seen members participate on digital deficit new technology courses at seven different locations with interest increasing after the company roll out of tablet devices.

This has led to our members gaining knowledge in apps, social media, online banking and email addresses, and from this we organised a digital

photography course with Paisley College; 13 learners attended a two day course to further develop their skills with digital cameras.

Aberdeen railway station was the place to be for our English for Speakers of other Languages course where 16 learners attended for eight weeks. Foreign languages, Spanish in particular, have been in demand, too, for our members with a five week course in Glasgow proving popular. Demand in Aberdeen was such that we ran a five week course on core skills with 18 learners in attendance.

With our freight sector members facing redundancies

ASLEF, through Glasgow Kelvin College, provided a CV writing and interview skills course at Edinburgh Waverley rail union learning centre to help our members secure future employment within the rail industry.

We are delighted that the ASLEF education project has met our targets for 2015/16. The response from our members, and those attending the courses we have provided, has been to have more of the same.

Our eight ULRs in Scotland have been focusing on our members' needs and encouraging workplace learning from Aberdeen to Ayr and from

Dundee to Dumfries.

With ULRs newly elected, ASLEF has provided development days as well as core union training courses essential to their role. ASLEF has also been in discussion with ScotRail to finalise a learning agreement and talks are ongoing to put this in place, an agreement which is pivotal to ASLEF and its representatives.

Going forward ASLEF education is confident of securing future funding for our 2016/17 learning fund from the Scottish government through the STUC. So learning will continue for our members and your needs will be our priority.

Harmonisation – because a driver is a driver is a driver



ANDY HUDD,
executive
committee member
for District 7, on
the future for

ASLEF members on the Great Western Railway

WE RECOGNISE in our rule book that 'the only way our members shall prosper is through the promotion of unity amongst the membership.' This lesson has been learned over the last 136 years and has helped to deliver improvements in the pay, conditions and safety of our members. Before the formation of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen in 1880 the fledgling railway societies were conciliatory and provided only isolated resistance to the attacks from their privateering paymasters. One example was a dispute with – you guessed it – the Great Western Railway over the imposition of longer hours and a cut in pay.

LESSONS OF HISTORY

At the end of the dispute it was recognised by the newly formed Associated Society of Steam Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen that 'None of the existing societies can protect the labour of the enginemen and firemen unless we combine to protect ourselves from injustice.' This belief in unity led to the formation of what became ASLEF.

The lessons of history – and similarities to today – cannot be ignored. On the Great Western today – due to the consolidation of Wessex, Thames Trains and Great Western – we have three sectors of the same company all on differing pay and terms and conditions. This company has a willingness to make changes to t&cs in an attempt to end the fractured way it currently operates and to deliver new trains and services that will accompany electrification and other infrastructure improvements to transform the region.

These changes will increase productivity and bring about a change in the working practices of each and every one of us and the



company impudently believes that it can impose most of these changes within our current t&cs.

I don't believe that. There are many varied t&cs and local agreements that will provide a significant operational (and financial) burden to prevent the full realisation of their ideas. I believe they will need the co-operation of all sectors to make the Great Western Railway a success and I also strongly believe the way to deal with this is through the negotiated harmonisation of all drivers in GWR. Harmonisation means we can embrace the future on our terms; only this will deliver the improvements to pay and conditions to all drivers on Great Western.

FIGHT TOOTH AND NAIL

The alternative to harmonisation is not a nice one to consider. The changes taking place within our industry, like electrification, new traction and ERTMS, are irreversible and will ultimately form the basis of Great Western working practices and, therefore, if we are not harmonised the company will wish to pick apart each sector, negotiating traction and technology agreements only where needed with the potential to see even greater differentials in pay and conditions between our members. And this is unacceptable.

In this non-harmonised world we would have to fight tooth and nail over every proposition put to every sector in a company that wishes to divide us by pay scale and, in doing so, weaken and



ASLEF
THE TRAIN DRIVERS' UNION

The argument over harmonisation at GWR goes to the heart of what this trade union is all about

undermine our members and the tenets of our trade union. This scenario would also fail to deliver unity when we need it most – with the backdrop of Tory attacks on trade union freedom and funding, the European Commission's Fourth Railway Package and a DfT that is ready, according to Peter Wilkinson, for a 'punch up.'

As a trade union that has equality, solidarity and co-operation at the heart of its existence we will continue to argue that any future agreements – and the benefits from them – should be for all. We are all drivers and, whether driving HSTs, turbos or units, we face the same risks every day – the same red lights, the same disruption, the same shiftwork and the same horror that comes from a fatality. To me, a driver is a driver is a driver, and, where we have the opportunity to do so, ASLEF should show our members, and the industry, that we are serious about equality and solidarity.

INDUSTRIAL BENEFITS

Harmonisation means giving every driver of Great Western what they deserve for the job they do. It means paying everyone the same – we cannot as a union continue to have a situation where a driver working the same traction over the same route for the same company receives dramatically different pay. We should have the same conditions; just because the type of work or traction may be different why should some of our members get shorter breaks or

longer periods in the driving seat?

A harmonised Great Western means we will negotiate with the combined might of all three sectors with the obvious industrial benefits that will bring. Instead of standing still we can, with solidarity, advance the cause of our members and deal with the challenges ahead.

ULTIMATUM TO GWR

The full time officer and company council have endured a protracted period of negotiation which, sadly, ended without agreement. The executive committee felt that if we allowed negotiations to fail this would be bad for the membership of GWR. Therefore we have given the company an ultimatum to enter into meaningful negotiations. This was done with the intention of giving our negotiators the support and leverage they need. ASLEF's recent history, post-privatisation, tells us that failure to achieve harmonisation brings disunity and industrial strife and our history from the birth of our union tells us we are stronger if 'we combine to protect ourselves from injustice.'

I know some of my colleagues on Great Western have deep concerns over harmonisation but I ask you to consider all of the arguments carefully and consider any future proposals on balance and with consideration to others. I don't want harmonisation at any cost but I do want us to exhaust all avenues. After all, equality and unity go to the very core of our trade union.

West drivers are feeling a little like Cinderella

SO, harmonisation is dead on GWR. Fingers of blame will no doubt be pointed. No surprise there. What shouldn't be a surprise is the anger felt by members, particularly those on the West.

Since the amalgamation into FGW/GWR, the West has enjoyed the lowest pay, less annual leave, and worse terms and conditions that fall short of those enjoyed by colleagues on HSS/LTV. West drivers are feeling a little like Cinderella! Drivers today don't just want equality, they expect it. True, we have lost collective bargaining, due to privatisation, but within one company? There is no excuse; people doing the same job in the same company expect to receive the same reward for their time. Surely that is fundamental to us a trade union?

We, as a union, have many political sidelines, but our main function is to give a service to train drivers who choose to pay in. West drivers on GWR are asking where

that is. Colleagues, we need to move forward together. Look at the recent success on LUL and ATW. The union, and a collective workforce, achieved their goals. It works! Some of us have had it better than others over the years. Great!

Times, though, are changing. Surely one driver grade is the way to go. We have a lot of new, young drivers coming through, so let's give them a future to be proud of.

Finally, I would like to put out a challenge. I have heard many drivers say, 'I am pro-harmonisation, but don't expect me to give anything up for you.' Sometimes, in life, we may need to take a step back in order to go forward. If a few choose to go back, in a small way, collectively we can all go forward. Think what that could achieve. Think of the future we would be setting up; strong and inclusive. That is what ASLEF stands for. That is union.

Michael Butler, branch secretary, Penzance

Pension news

Gateshead & Newcastle branch ULR reps held an open pension forum with EC president Tosh McDonald on 25 February to give members the very latest news on the pension changes coming into force. It was attended by 30 drivers from the four companies based in our area. Tosh spoke from the heart, with great knowledge and



Speaking from the heart

conviction, for over an hour, followed by a question & answer session. Drivers said they found the day very informative, so we intend to arrange another later this

year. I urge other ULR reps to arrange a similar day in your area for the benefit of all members.

Gary Arrowsmith, ULR rep, Northern Rail

MAKING THE BEST OF CHANGE

Slade Green branch would like to express our thanks to William Williams, our ex-DCC member, for his service on company council. Hope you're keeping your head down and ticking off the days to retirement! We welcomed current DCC (Steve Burgess, Ali Hussain and new member Martin Brookes) for a Q&A on subjects that included pension changes and a possible takeover by TfL when the current franchise ends in 2018. While everyone would rather keep the existing pension arrangements, ASLEF seems to be fighting to make the best of the change in government legislation.

Richard White, branch secretary

Upcoming events

RAMSGATE – THURSDAY 7 APRIL

Southeastern retired and working members' reunion from 11.0 at the Red Arrow Club, Newington Road, Ramsgate.

NORWICH – FRIDAY 15 APRIL

Reunion from 19.00 at Arkwrights social club, Hobart Square, Norwich. Details from Chris Pearson (07776 123206).

STONEBRIDGE PARK – SATURDAY 16 APRIL

It's our Big 50! Annual reunion and 50th anniversary from 14.00 at the Skinners Arms, 114 Judd St, London, WC1H 9NT.

DIDCOT – SATURDAY 30 APRIL

Didcot celebrates its Big 50 from 12.0 at the Didcot staff club. Past, present and associate members are all very welcome.

STRATFORD – SATURDAY 30 APRIL

Annual reunion from 17.00 at the Railway Tavern Hotel, 131 Angel Lane, Stratford, E15. All welcome.

BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 3 MAY

For all retired and working members at Brighton and the other Sussex branches from 14.00 at Brighton railway club.

HITHER GREEN – WEDNESDAY 11 MAY

Old boys' reunion from 11.0 in the Greyhound, London Road, Bromley. (Ray Cooper and Len Blackford).

OLD OAK COMMON – TUESDAY 14 JUNE

The retired section's annual reunion is from 13.00 to 16.00 at the AGV Club, Ponderosa, Alwyn Gardens, Acton, W3 0JH. Anyone with OOC history is welcome.

ASHFORD – THURSDAY 7 JULY

Southeastern retired and working members' reunion from 11.0 at Ashford Railway Club, Beaver Lane, Ashford.

✉ Please send your all branch news, reports and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

Tango'd by Tangmere

I would have expected better from ASLEF! In the article on the West Coast Railway Company (*Journal*, February) you refer to the steam loco *Tangmere* as being in Southern Railway livery. As all steam men will know she is sporting the late express passenger British Railways livery. I know, I know. I should get out more...

Glenn Roofthoof, RMS

PIE AND A PINT

Ripple Lane retirees are still alive and well and gathering for an ale or two (and a good reminiscence) at the LT Club, near Hornchurch station, on the first Friday of each month. All are very welcome to enjoy a pint and a cheese roll from 13.00.

Cliff Blackwell

ENLIGHTENMENT AT SCALBY

The RMS forum at Scalby was a very interesting and enlightening weekend. Tosh McDonald, the EC president, kicked things off with a rousing speech and the film shown on Saturday morning, *Still the Enemy Within*, about the NUM and the miners' strike, was fascinating.

Crawford Kennedy and William Dickson, Glasgow

Real sense of anger over ruthless world of freight on rail



District 5 Organiser NIGEL GIBSON, lead officer for Freightliner Intermodal, Freightliner Heavy Haul, and GB Railfreight, as well as Greater Anglia, c2c, and Crossrail, poses some pertinent questions in a bid to plot a better world for FOCs and TOCs

THE situation with Freightliner Heavy Haul downsizing their business has highlighted, again, the inadequacies of the rail freight market in delivering secure employment for our members. Whilst we would perhaps question why companies allowed themselves to be susceptible, the question for us is surely, looking back, what could we have done differently?

At FLHH a few years ago there was a constant growth of work, perhaps at the expense of others, with a severe lack of driver numbers creating high earnings and excessive hours at some locations. ASLEF representatives were persistent in challenging this developing culture and demanding that FLHH took on more drivers, not because, as some would have you believe, we wanted the additional subs, but because we believe in a safe working environment, minimising fatigue, whilst also seeing the creation of good quality job opportunities for many more, rather than more money for a few.

When I see clear attempts by one company to exploit the shortcomings of a sister branded company, it leaves me with a real sense of anger but, nonetheless, a realisation of how ruthless the freight world is. Whilst the issue facing FLHH will not be turned around quickly, because their original core business relied on coal traffic, the way the rail freight industry is currently structured, with companies fighting for each and every contract, is surely unsustainable in the long term.

A failure of freight operators to recognise that long term job security is essential to most people, including those of us who work in the rail industry, will surely see their future demise. Who will want to work for a company that can only offer security for the life of a short term contract?

TUPE regulations are so open to interpretation that companies appear to pick and choose when it suits and make a case based on the viability of the company at the time. So what can we do to bring greater stability for our members? Do we call for the nationalisation of the rail freight market? And how realistic is that? Do we make a case that actually a lot of the infrastructure work



would be more secure with the TOCs? Do we look at what can be done to achieve long term no compulsory redundancy agreements?

Should we be looking at coercing companies to play nicely and acknowledge that when contracts transfer from one company to another they must accept a principle that staff will also be part of that process? No doubt contract managers would scream about competition regulations yet, surely, it is not beyond the wit of their legal people to come up with an understanding that protects workers' interests in these circumstances? Such an arrangement, it might be argued, would make their bid process less advantageous to winning contracts but this would only demonstrate that staff flexibility is being exploited to benefit shareholders.

We work with Freight on Rail, a positive campaigning group, with the buy-in of most of the freight operators. Is there more we can do, politically, about the state of the rail freight market and the rules that govern it?

In stark contrast, there has been recent media interest in train driver shortages yet, in truth, they only see the tip of a huge iceberg which is being propped up by a willingness to inflate personal income. Passenger companies appear to offer the job security lacking in the freight world, and with increasing numbers of passenger journeys recruitment will, it seems, continue. So have we allowed ourselves to be drawn into the franchise world, protecting parochial interests, putting on our ear defenders so we can ignore what is going on elsewhere?

We still see the clamour and sweat as the rosters are posted and studied with a keen eye before the equalisation charts draw you like a magnet, followed by an urgent call to the LDC hotline. In the next breath we hear how the union has sold out again, by agreeing to another rest day sanction.

Is it time to reflect and regroup as a union nationally? Time to reinforce the popular public view that railway undertakings nationally should employ enough drivers to run the trains for which they pay inflated fares?

This is not about wanting to see the companies fail or the passengers suffer; there can be an achievable expectation that brings an industry no longer reliant on institutionalised overtime working, whether that be rest days or Sundays.



Mick Holder turns back time to April 1916

The editor of the *Locomotive Journal* on the weather, lenses for motormen and the right to get drunk down the pub

LOST IN SNOW DRIFTS

'We have had some grand weather for railwaymen during February and March,' records the editor, 'and in several places trains have been lost in snow drifts. In the Peak District traffic was brought to a standstill on the Buxton and Ashbourne line, while snow ploughs had to be used on several sections of the London and North Western and Midlands Railways. Gangs of men had to be employed removing snow at Longcliffe station on the High Peak Railway. A mile further on a train which had been abandoned in the storm on Tuesday was still embedded in the snow on Thursday. In East Westmoreland a North Eastern Railway train was only able to get through with the aid of a snow plough.'

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The editor offers 'Our hearty congratulations to our London Electric Railways Delegation Board, which has succeeded in getting sanction for motormen to wear lenses on duty, at least on the City and South London line for a beginning. This is a step in the right direction, for it is better for both companies and men that our members should be allowed to protect their sight under all circumstances. The main line railways may well follow this example, for our members on steam trains facing sparks and elements certainly require eye protection and assistance.'

THE RIGHT TO GET DRUNK

Following the government's restrictions on pub opening hours, the pseudonymous Pax, in an article entitled *A Sign of Social Progress – The Right to Get Drunk*, writes: 'I attended a business meeting of trade unionists which asserted the right in theory for men to get drunk if they wish. They were discussing the restriction of hours, and a resolution of emphatic protest was carried unanimously. The speakers waxed indignant about the Prussianising of this country, and declaimed in vigorous terms about the insult to the British workman in closing his resort for recreation, social intercourse, and refreshment, during so many hours.'

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Why is the government trying to stop union health and safety representatives doing their job?

Days lost through
injuries or illnesses
caused by work
28.2m

Days lost
through strike
action last year
0.8m

Union safety
reps reduce
serious injuries by
50%

The Trade Union Bill will:

- ⚠ Allow the Government to restrict the time off that health and safety representatives in the public sector are entitled to take.
- ⚠ Make it more difficult to take action against employers who risk the health and safety of workers.
- ⚠ Reduce the ability of unions to campaign on health and safety issues.



Find out more about the bill and how to stop it: www.tuc.org.uk/tubill



MANCHESTER TRADES UNION COUNCIL

150th Anniversary year
Presents for your entertainment and pleasure

The Manchester May Day Festival

Saturday 30th April 2016



- 11.45** Starting Rally
- 12.15** May Day march - bring union banners
- 13.00 - 17.00** Indoors at the Mechanics Institute and outdoors at Sackville Gardens - a day of events, discussion, stalls, exhibitions, film showings, music and entertainment
 - looking back at our history including the history of trade unionism in Manchester and the Spanish Civil War.
 - planning how we stand up for our planet, our NHS and our rights at work today.
 - making links with trade unionists from around the world, including Chicago, Ireland, Palestine and Latin America.

The Real Junk Food Project will provide pay-as-you-feel food in Sackville Gardens and there will be tea and coffee and a licensed bar at the Mechanics.

- 17.30 - 19.00** May Day rally with confirmed speakers including Christine Blower (NUT), Lynn Collins (NWTUC), Arthur Scargill (NUM), Mark Serwotka (PCS), Hannah McCarthy (NUS) and Dave Ward (CWU).

- 20.00** MTUC and Banner Theatre present "Chicago the Great Teachers Strike".

All at the Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester, M1 6DD

The birthplace of the TUC

MTUC and UoM Students Union present an evening of music.
Time and venue to be confirmed.



RON 'RAB' RABBETTS LIFELONG MEMBER WHO TOOK ON THE UNION HIERARCHY

Ron Rabbetts joined the railway on 22 August 1944 as an engine cleaner at Eastleigh loco shed. Many sheds lost work in the 1950s which meant Ron, and many others, went looking to find a job on the footplate in other areas of the old Southern region. Ron arrived at Brighton depot in the late '50s and

remained here until his retirement in 1994. He became an active member of our branch and was chair during one of the saddest events in Brighton's long history, the loss of two members in the tragic train crash at Itchingfield junction. Ron was actively involved in trying to clear the names of our lost

comrades, driver Mick Guppy and second man John Myles. This saw the branch taking on the hierarchy of our union in its fight to obtain legal representation for our lost brothers and compensation for the bereaved families. It came to a head at AAD in 1967 where our branch lost its appeal by eight votes.

This defeat did not stop Ron and Brighton branch. They set up a nationwide appeal, which ran for 18 months and raised close to £1,000 for the families, which was a lot of money in those days. Ron was a loyal and lifelong member of our union.

Dave Devonport, Brighton branch chair

DENIS McDONALD RACONTEUR PAR EXCELLENCE

Denis McDonald died suddenly at the end of January at the age of 55. He began on BR Midland region in July 1977 and it was his Cricklewood colleagues who first benefited from his spark. He moved to Bournemouth with South West Trains before joining Eurostar at Waterloo in January 1995. He was among the pioneers forging the way for this fledgling company to blossom into the established international carrier it is today, moving with it to St Pancras International in 2007.

When you lodged with Denis, in Paris or Brussels, everyone (all grades of train crew) agreed you were going to be entertained. The same was true in the mess room. He was a raconteur *par excellence*, a sardonic wit, a keen and ironic observer, and you were privileged to be with him, always leaving with a smile. But when he'd stopped joking, he was an invaluable source of freely-given advice on traction, rules, and life in general.

A modest and private man, he was an avid Arsenal fan and proud technophobe, often joining colleagues at their homes near him in



Denis McDonald: Let me entertain you

Ashford to watch the match or fix his phone. He tried hard to disguise his intelligence and charm but failed, and we, his extended railway family, are grateful to have shared it. We all cherish the memory of our departed friend, our joker, and he will not be forgotten.

Ian Chivers, St Pancras International

JOHN PILCHER A PASSION FOR STEAM

John Pilcher passed away peacefully in hospital after a long battle with cancer. He was 79. John started his footplate career at Ramsgate before moving to Nine Elms in London where he worked on trains such as the *Bournemouth Belle* and *Atlantic Coast Express*. With the end of steam on Southern, and the closure of Nine Elms, John moved to Waterloo, which was in the vanguard of ASLEF's industrial struggles in the 1970s and '80s, and John was always a loyal member of the union. In the early '90s he moved to Hither Green where his wealth of steam experience was pounced on by management as HG was to provide crews for steam specials. As well as driving and firing he took on the mantle of steam traction inspector. After retiring in 1997 he continued his passion for steam, spending many happy hours with his friends at Welling model engineering club running his miniature loco. His funeral on 28 January at Eltham crematorium was attended by more than 60 friends and ex-colleagues taking time to pay their last respects to a well-respected railway gentleman.

Andy Flett, Hither Green RMS

BRIAN YOUNG THE HANGLETON GAZETTE

It is with great sadness that we have to report the passing of retired Brighton driver Brian Young, aged 84. Brian started his railway career at the age of 14 on 29 April 1946. On 21 July 1947 he became an engine cleaner at Bournemouth loco shed, where he progressed through the various footplate grades. During the late 1950s, Bournemouth lost work due to the closure of many local lines, and enginemen had to relocate to other depots within the old Southern region of British Rail. This brought Brian eastwards to Brighton. With the loss of steam in 1964 Brian learned the various forms of diesel traction that replaced them, working over the routes operated from Brighton loco mixed traction No1 branch. Shortly after the amalgamation of the Brighton mixed traction and electric depots, Brian decided to opt out of diesel work and spent the last few years of his railway career on electric multiple units. Brian always seemed to know everything that was going on at Brighton depot, hence his fond nickname of the *Hangleton Gazette* after the suburb where he lived. During the 1970s he served on the LDC of Brighton No1 branch, and was a lifelong, and loyal, member of our Society. He will be deeply missed by those who had the privilege of working with him.

Dave Devonport, Brighton

JOHN 'MICK' GILLAM NEVER LEFT THE RAILWAY

I am sad to report the death on Christmas Eve of my oldest and dearest friend, John Gillam, known as Mick. He was 71. He started cleaning, then firing, at Brighton, got his driving job at Coudson, and then moved to Littlehampton. His wife Sue became very ill and he took a traction inspector's job so he could look after her, and retired early when she needed full-time care. But, like many of us, he never left the railway. He was at every reunion and get together because he loved the friendship and the banter between locomen. We shared a pushchair as two-year-olds, we started school, left school, and started work together. He had a sharp wit and a great sense of humour. We played golf together and often said, whilst walking the course, that we wouldn't change anything in our lives. But I would love the chance to play another game with him. John leaves two sons, John and Glenn, and his partner Pam.

Spike Jones, Brighton RMS

RON CLARK TRUE YORKSHIREMAN

With sadness I report the loss, after a short illness, of Ron Clark on 4 January. His footplate career started in 1946 at Hellfield shed, until closure in 1962, then PTR movement to Newton Heath and, later, Manchester Victoria until retirement. A true Yorkshireman, born near Settle, not just a big man, but able to put his points across, which made him a popular member of the depot and branch. And always supportive of ASLEF through good, and difficult, times.

Sam Black, Manchester

BILL MORRISON

I am writing to inform you that Bill Morrison has passed away, 10 years after retiring from ScotRail. He was formerly a member of Paddington branch before moving to Aberdeen in October 1991. Sadly missed.

Brian Wood, Aberdeen

We welcome letters, either by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN**. The writer of our star letter wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.

Proposed pension changes

It came completely out of the blue when I received a letter from my employer relating to changes to my pension that the union is in complete support of! Yet again ASLEF has entered talks, agreed the outcome, without consulting with drivers, who you are supposed to represent.

I fully understand the shortfall that would have resulted following the changes to NI contributions in April and I welcome some of the changes but I cannot stomach that, because of my start date, after privatisation, I now have to work to 62 to receive my pension! This goes completely against the ASLEF charter! What next? DOO? It is disgusting! Surely some kind of option to still retire at 60, with increased contributions, could be made available to all drivers? And what exactly is 'cost neutral'? There's no defined method for calculating this I have seen, so does somebody in Darlington just pluck a number out of thin air to calculate your pension if you want to retire early?

I am 48, with nearly 20 years of contributions as I transferred several personal pensions into the RPS; I was working towards retiring at 55 and, until last week, I knew exactly what I'd be getting, with 10% coming off my pot (2% a year) as I pay the maximum into brass! Now I can only guess what I'm going to accrue for the next seven years.

I am seriously considering cancelling my ASLEF membership and putting that money towards my pension! As a union we are supposed to stand together for all our members, equal rights and fair shares for all. Well, I feel I am being singled out and victimised along with every other driver who is not ex-BR!

Gavin Turner, GWR driver, Bristol

Supplementary reading

In reply to Steve Hill's comments in the *March Journal*, Simon Weller's printed response is spot on. Additionally, he and the team at ASLEF have gone to great lengths to explain the reasons for the pension changes as a result of the government's alterations to the state pension. Steve would be well advised to read the supplement in the *March Journal* which explains the reasons for the most recent outcome; as an outsider he would not benefit from this.

As a trustee director of the RPS I wish to make it clear that members of TOCs and FOCs still have a final salary pension (or

DRIVER ONLY OPERATION IS NOT MODERN OR SAFE

We stand on the brink as GTR seems hell bent on imposing DOO and I want to address my fellow drivers on this. It can't have escaped your notice that TOCs up and down the land are drawing up plans to impose DOO(P). The excuse usually offered is 'it's part of the contract agreement' or 'the McNulty report'. That report will, in time, be regarded as bad as Beeching; but it does not demand DOO, only recommends it.

DOO is not modern or safe (and there can be no cost put on safety). The reason for DOO is to boost company profits. But drivers need to be left alone to concentrate on driving, in an ever more demanding role, safe in the knowledge that they have with them a fully trained PTS-capable professional conductor/guard who will assist them in an emergency, or who can take charge if the driver is incapacitated.

I'd remind you of our



Marz Colombini, Howard Kaye, Simon Weller, Tosh McDonald, Mick Whelan and Hugh Bradley join RMT officers to sign a joint declaration against DOO

general secretary's statement that there is to be no extension to DOO(P). And we should be looking to revisit what there already is. Those of you who work DOO(P) were probably never given a choice, but must feel it would be safer to have a guard with you. I urge you to consider this well. Because people in years to come will ask if we did all we could for the good of the railway and the safety of the travelling public?

You will have read that no matter what company policies are in

place, the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 can be used by the CPS to prosecute you if someone is killed or injured as a result of your moving train! We need to view with utter disdain the threat to the livelihoods of our conductor/guards. We need PTS qualified conductor/guards on all passenger trains, where they can follow the dispatch regulations, can clearly see the platform and are ready to stop the train in an emergency.
Mike Trodd, Barnham LSR

defined benefit) which is open to new employees, this despite the fact that nearly every DB scheme in the UK is either closed to new employees, or closed to new accrual, which applies in the private and public sectors. Almost 50% of the sections of the RPS are closed to new members. The fact that we still have a DB pension is down to several factors; it is shared cost (so we share the cost of any deficit) as opposed to balance of cost where employees' contributions are fixed and, due to strong representations made by unions in the run-up to the privatisation of our industry, protections were agreed by ministers. I am convinced that our strength as a collective is also a major factor in protecting the scheme's open status.

One major problem that will determine the scheme's future will be the future state of the world economy, and affordability,

but I am sure if there were plans to close the RPS then our EC would take the appropriate action.

I would also remind Steve that, pre-privatisation, ASLEF's membership was as low as 13,000 and we were on a basic wage of £10,000. As a result of the 1995 pay dispute we increased basic pay to £20,000, reduced the working week to 37, then 35, hours, and membership is now up to almost 20,000. Most members have enjoyed above-inflation increases in pay each year since privatisation, and a final salary pension. I am also sure ASLEF is rising to challenges that face our members on Freightliner, and those in the DfT who seek a 'punch up' with drivers, not forgetting possible changes to the taxation of pensions in the Budget. I, for one, am extremely grateful for the representation, support and opportunities my union has

given me over the last 35 years.

David Tyson, ASLEF nominated trustee director, Railways Pension Scheme

EU and a sense of déjà vu

I feel a sense of déjà vu. Unbelievably, the executive committee have taken it upon themselves to decide ASLEF's position on the EU referendum. This, despite the fact there are motions to the sovereign AAD, calling for lessons to be learned from the Scottish independence referendum and a debate had. We are told that ASLEF's position on the EU has been 'out' since it was last discussed – in 1975! When I wasn't even born! I wonder what else was discussed that year? Perhaps all our pay negotiations are still carried out in pounds, shillings and pence?

Even more infuriating are the public pronouncements that as socialists their position was taken on the basis of the way the Greek people were treated. What about the way workers will be treated in this country with a Tory government unfettered by working time directives or human rights legislation? That said, my issue isn't with the decision but how it was taken. There is an irony in the 'socialists' at the top of our union acting more like the bureaucrats of Brussels than defenders of workers' democracy. Where is the democracy and socialist principles in how this decision was made? It seems ASLEF is not the place to have a meaningful, or modern, discussion on the topic.

Steven Nimmo, Edinburgh

Drivers and nurses

I find it strange when people compare jobs and pay, as in the Letters section of the *January Journal*, relating to train drivers and nurses. While nurses play a very important part in the NHS, there is no comparison with the job of a train driver. We do not want to go down the path of saying which job is worth more when it comes to salary, but it might be useful to remind ourselves of the modern train driver's role. Drivers operate machinery of up to 300 tonnes, carrying hundreds of people. Modern technology means trains can be operated with the driver in sole charge – driving, opening and closing doors, responsible for the safe delivery of passengers to their destinations. Increased responsibility, hence increased salary.

Anthony Corbett, London

Please tackle depression

After the sad passing of a well-respected colleague I feel that ASLEF, as a union, should be doing more to support awareness of depression in men. Figures for male depression have been increasing – there were 4,623 male suicides in the UK in 2014 – but there seems to be no support for the prevention or management of depression resulting in suicide.

Every train driver knows the driving environment can be a lonely place, and if a driver has what might be a small issue the isolating environment can turn it into a major concern by the end of the turn, which can be compounded when there are problems out of work. I am not sure any driver would go to management and say they have suicidal tendencies knowing this would be the end of their career.

The feeling is that although there is immense promotion of various awareness campaigns that do not affect the day to day life of the driver, as the union's core membership is men, maybe it's time ASLEF concentrated on awareness of this subject and I don't just mean a poster on the mess room wall.

Men are not forthcoming when it comes to health issues. Depression is not obvious, and is very easy to conceal, unlike physical illness. It's hard to be open in the mess room as the railway has always dealt with issues in a 'move on and deal with it' attitude. If a driver is suffering it's doubtful he would open up in the mess room and leave himself open to ridicule.

Robert Walkley, St Pancras International

Three cheers for the ORR

Regarding the Office of Road and Rail's investigation into West Coast Railways; their Chief Investigating Officer, **Ian Prosser**, is compelling West Coast to finish their zero hours contracts with their train crews and put them onto a proper salary. They consider that zero hours is not conducive to safety. This now sets a precedent all unions can use. Zero hours are unsafe, especially for anyone doing a safety critical job in transport. Three cheers for the wise council of the ORR.

Arno Brooks, York

Amigo's no friend of mine

I felt I had to write in about the article in Branch News (*Journal*, December) headed *Adiós a très amigos from Stratford DBS*. I was disappointed with them wishing a fond farewell and happy retirement to one of their 86 scabs of 1982. Personally, I think the individual should leave the industry with his tail between his legs, never to be talked about or remembered again. There, I have said what many round this way are thinking.

A Derrett, Ipswich

DfT's pen-pushing clown

I'm disgusted by the comments made by **Peter Wilkinson**, the pen-pushing clown from the Department for Transport. Can I ask that ASLEF submit a freedom of information request to the DfT asking for Wilkinson's annual salary and how many days a week he works? It might throw up something embarrassing enough to make him resign.

Darrel Hendrie



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Where there's a Will – 400 years of the Bard

It's 400 years since William Shakespeare died at his home, New Place, in Stratford-upon-Avon. **KEITH RICHMOND** examines the enduring appeal of the Bard of Avon

AGE cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety. That's the gnarled old warrior Enobarbus explaining to Agrippa and Mecaenas why Mark Antony won't leave Cleopatra. The same, though, can be said of the man who wrote those words, William Shakespeare, to whom Ben Jonson, his fellow poet and playwright, paid this tribute: 'He was not of an age but for all time!'

Shakespeare died 400 years ago, on 23 April 1616, which may have been his birthday. Records show he was baptised at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, on 26 April 1564, the son of John Shakespeare, a glover, and Mary Arden, and his birth has traditionally been celebrated on St George's Day. Even if we're a day or two out, it's a nice idea; England's national poet being born (and later dying) on England's national day.

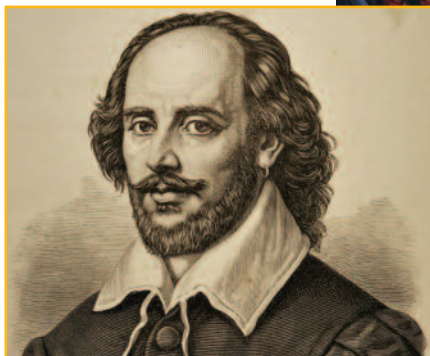
‘Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?’ – Sonnet 18

He was educated at the local grammar school and married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior, in November 1582; their daughter was born six months later. He moved to London (while his wife and daughter stayed in Stratford) and, by 1594, was acting with and writing for the Lord Chamberlain's Men at playhouses such as the Rose, the Curtain, the Blackfriars and the Globe.

Shakespeare left an extraordinary literary legacy – poems such as *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* and all those sexy sonnets – as well as the plays which are still performed, somewhere around the world, every hour of every day of every year.

They include the great tragedies *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*; comedies such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love's Labour's Lost*; *The Comedy of Errors* and *All's Well That Ends Well*; the Roman plays *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Titus Andronicus*; the English histories *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI* and *Richard III*; and those open air summer theatre staples *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The enduring influence of a man who – to use his own description of Caesar – ‘doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus’ shows in the phrases which have slipped into the common currency of the English language, such as ‘heart of gold’ and ‘band of brothers’

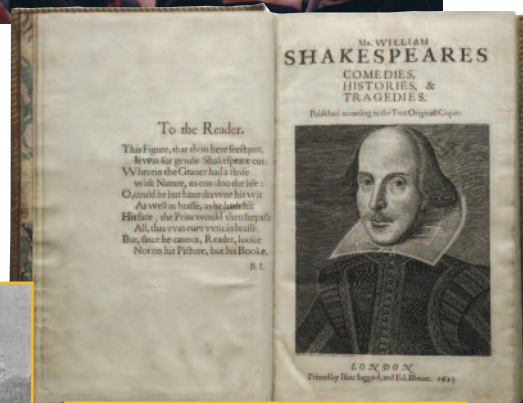
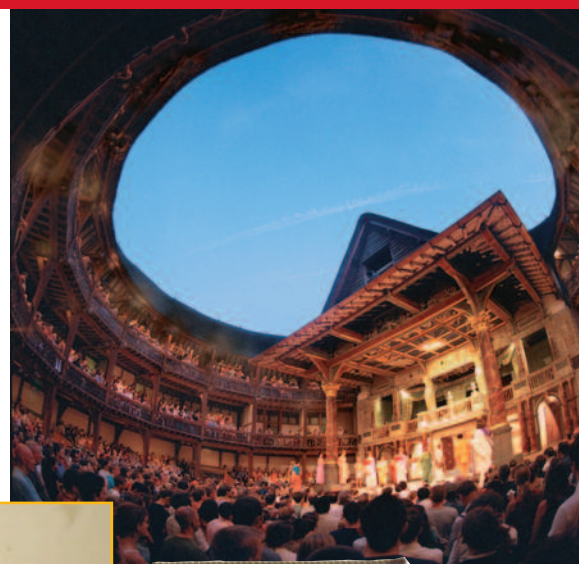


(*Henry V*); ‘bated breath’ (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*); ‘cold comfort’ (*The Taming of the Shrew*); ‘crack of doom’ (*Macbeth*); ‘dead as a doornail’ (*Henry VI*); ‘devil incarnate’ (*Titus Andronicus*); ‘the green eyed monster’ (*Othello*); ‘love is blind’ (*The Merchant of Venice*); ‘hoist with his own petard’ (*Hamlet*); and ‘What’s in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet’ (*Romeo and Juliet*).

‘To be, or not to be? That is the question.’ – *Hamlet*

As Bernard Levin said, ‘If you claim to be more sinned against than sinning; if you recall your salad days; if you act more in sorrow than in anger; if your wish is father to the thought; if your lost property has vanished into thin air; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or played fast and loose, or been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle; if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, laughed yourself into stitches, had short shrift, or too much of a good thing, or lived in a fool’s paradise, then you are quoting Shakespeare.’

It’s not just the poetry of his language, it’s the power and the passion of the stories he tells, the compelling characters he creates, and



the light he shines, on the page and on the stage, on the range of human experience. He was exceptionally good at understanding the emotional and intellectual drivers that explain why we do what we do.

‘Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this sun of York.’ – *Richard III*

The notion that the plays attributed to Shakespeare were written by Francis Bacon or the Earl of Oxford or, indeed, anyone else, is a hoary theory, usually floated by snobs not over familiar with the texts, who cannot bear to believe that a jobbing actor from relatively humble origins in a small Warwickshire town wrote some of the greatest plays and poetry in the English language.

The theory, which is risible, and not taken seriously by any Shakespeare scholar of note, neglects the fact that when *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, better known as the first folio, was published in 1623, just seven years after his death, it was celebrated by the actors who worked with him as part of the King's Men company and knew him well.

RAISIN FLAPJACKS

Lucy Knox's gorgeously gooey tray-bake oat bars



Combine 150g butter, 100g golden syrup and 75g golden caster sugar in a pan and heat gently until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved. Stir in 250g porridge oats and 100g raisins. Spoon into a 20cm square tin, greased and lined with baking paper, and press to flatten with the back of the spoon. Bake for 25 to 30 mins in an oven preheated to 160C/140C fan/Gas 3 until golden. Take out and leave to cool for 10 mins. Mark into 12 slices with a knife and leave until cold before removing from the tin and cutting into pieces.



BRING ME MY BOW

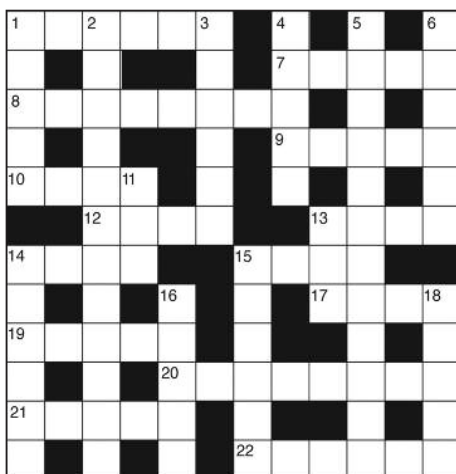
Charles Wells' refreshing premium golden bitter Bombardier Burning Gold was inspired by the words of *Jerusalem* by William Blake – 'Bring me my bow of burning gold / Bring me my arrows of desire' – and brewed in Bedford to celebrate St George's Day on 23 April. £1.20 at Aldi, Asda, Morrisons and Sainsbury's. 'Bring me my chariot of fire!'

MUGGLES CAKE



No need for scales or baking tins with this brilliant Cake in a Mug (Lakeland, £7.99). Just measure out the self-raising flour, sugar and cocoa powder to the lines in the mug, add an egg, 9tsp milk, 9tsp sunflower oil, pop 2 squares of chocolate in the centre and microwave on full power for 3 mins. Hey presto! Choccie cake for pud!

Prize Crossword 120 by Tom Williams



Across

1 Spring or summer
7 Precise and accurate
8 Police guard dog
9 Name of a book
10 A particular variety
12 Fling up like the caber
13 Speck of grime
14 Walk awkwardly
15 Make beer
17 Spiders' snares
19 Pit worker
20 End of play speech
21 Sister's daughter
22 Elastic stocking band

Down

1 Quick light mini meal
2 Forgetful (6, 6)
3 Sounds of any kind
4 Next after ninth
5 Class of boxer
6 Road lined with buildings
11 Female deer
13 Work with needle and thread
14 Citrus fruits
15 Fist fighting
16 Language of Greece
18 To clip or fleece band

Solution to Crossword 119

Across: 1 Kebab, 7 Alchemy, 8 Eagerly, 9 Squalor, 11 Lament, 13 Greenland, 15 Passenger, 19 Copied, 21 Huddled, 23 Amenity, 24 Earshot, 25 Alien.

Down: 1 Knell, 2 Bigamy, 3 Bering, 4 Ways, 5 Thrall, 6 Impound, 10 Quebec, 12 Trance, 14 Samurai, 16 Sadism, 17 Rowena, 18 Bikini, 20 Doyen, 22 Data.

Congratulations to **Bill Marlow of West Moors, Ferndown, Dorset**, who was last month's winner. The winner of this month's Prize Crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25



○ You can see more of Tom Williams's crosswords, word games and puzzles at wordgames.co.uk

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 119th prize crossword in the March edition of the *ASLEF Journal*. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, *ASLEF Journal*, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 April

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RAIL AND ROAD RISK
LINESIDE EQUIPMENT
APATHY

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MANAGEMENT
SEATING
FREIGHT
BRIEFINGS
RIDDOR

WORKLOAD
SKILLS

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